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THE ULTIMATES™ 2

ISSUE

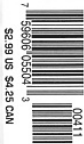
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Yes, we
know you
have a bomb,
sir.





Drug busts?
Hostage situations?
House fires? This is just
the stuff the emergency
crews have been doing
for *years*, Mrs. Pym.

Are the ultimates
really *worth* that extra
eighty-seven billion dollars
Nick Fury just secured
from Congress?

Cmon, Dave.
We do all that stuff
in our spare time. Our
main job is still national
defense. You ever see
a *Polaris Missile* save
a kid from a burning
building?



Well, we had your
friend Betty Ross on
last week talking about her
feelings after the execution
of Bruce Banner, but you've
obviously had your fair
share of heartache
too, Jan.

You ever hear
from your ex-husband
after he was dismissed
from the team for that
disgusting behavior
last year?



Not directly, but
I hear Kank's keeping
busy enough. It's all in the
hands of our attorneys
right now so I'm afraid I
can't say too much.



Urging anti-war protesters to do whatever it takes? Sounds to me like Thor's trying to *stir things up*, Jan. Can't you guys have a word in his ear and straighten this hippie out?



Well, Thor might not be a member of the team anymore, but he's a private citizen and entitled to his opinion.

That said, if he keeps spreading these stupid rumors that we're being sent to The Gulf with some European super-guys, I'm gonna have to give that naughty boy a smack.



Six foot three, two hundred and eighty pounds of super-soldier muscle mass and a face like Brad Pitt?

How does it feel to be living with a guy who's just been voted The Sexiest Man in America, Mrs. Pym?



To tell you the truth, I think *he's* the lucky one, Leezu...



Steve, what the hell are you doing in this dump? There's sweat stains on the carpet as old as my mother.



Just goes to show people actually **work out** down here, Jan. I hate all those other guys with their iPods and their MTV and their stupid, overpriced isotonic drinks.

The Triskelion has a ten million dollar sports facility and you're paying ten bucks an hour to hang around something that looks like a **prison workout room**?

This place has been here since the thirties, honey. I used to pass it every day on the way to my old job at the bakery. You've no **idea** how much it means to be a **member** now.

Yeah, well. Just remember to shower before you come home. We're going over to Hawkeye's place for dinner tonight.

Tony and Natasha are maybe coming too and Wanda and Pietro just called to say they were definite.

Not tonight. We're going to that ballroom dancing thing with Bucky and Gail.

Oh, God. I forgot about that. Can't we put them off?

I already bought tickets and booked the cars. You can't put them off. Bucky's been looking forward to this for ages. Gail bought a new dress and had her **hair** done this afternoon.

Oh, jeez. It's not that I don't want to **go** or anything. I mean, Bucky and Gail are **hilarious**, but...

Well, don't you think it might be nice to hang out with someone our own **age** every once in a while?

What are you **talking** about, baby?

Bucky and Gail were a year **behind** me at school.

THE BILLIONAIRE
BACHELOR CLUB,
SWITZERLAND:

Ahem.

If I could have
your attention
for a moment, please,
gentlemen.



What the blazes are *you* doing
here, Jarvis? Someone told me
you were about to dish the dirt
in some what-the-butler-saw
memoir you'd managed to
strike a deal for.

Isn't
Stark letting
you go?



Oh, I'm afraid loyalty to my
employer far outweighed *that*
little offer, Sir James...as did
the check young Master Tony
had the good sense to cut by
way of *compensation*.



No, I still run his household at this
precise moment in time and have traveled
here on Master Tony's behalf to impart
the most *terrible* of news.

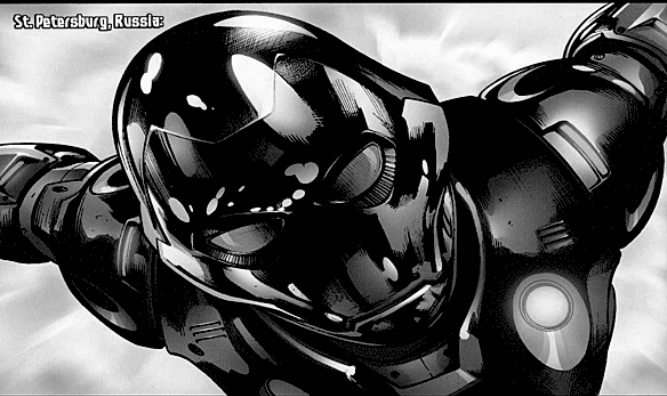
Don't tell me
he's had another
suicide attempt.
I thought this whole
Iron Man business
was keeping Tony's
black dog at bay
for a while.



Oh, it's far worse than
suicide, Mister Rockefeller.
I'm here to *inform* you that
your dear friend and fellow
bachelor has finally found
the *harlot* of his
dreams, sir.

Mister Tony
Stark has fallen
in love.

St. Petersburg, Russia:



You thought of
a good name yet,
Miss Romanov?



Well, Tony suggested
Cybernetrix or *Iron
Maiden*, but I think
they both sound a little
silly, Mister Hogan.

There's plenty of *black* in
this birthday gift he designed
for me so *Black Widow* still
works, don't you think?
Approaching mach three...



You look amazing in that armor, Natasha. You look like something out of one of those dirty little Japanese cartoons and I must confess that I'm quite turned on.

It's the most amazing present I've ever had, darling. The nanites feel like a second skin...

C'mon.

The suit was only half the surprise.

You should have seen the dirty look Janet Pym gave me when I told her about all the other stuff you delivered this morning.

She hates me more than all the others put together. Can you believe she told Hawkeye I was only after your cash?

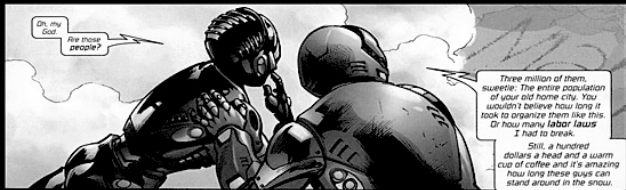
Well, that's because she's never seen me naked... or seen how unhappy I was when I was dating Christina, Paris and all the rest of those little airheads.

You're the first real person I've ever actually met, Natasha, and one thing the tumor has taught me is never to pass up a golden opportunity when I see one.

What the hell is this?

The other half of the surprise, of course.

WILL YOU
MARRY ME?



Oh, my God.

Are those people?

Three million of them, sweetie. The entire population of your old home city. You wouldn't believe how long it took to organize them like this. Or how many labor laws I had to break.

Still, a hundred dollars a head and a warm cup of coffee and it's amazing how long these guys can stand around in the snow.



What's the matter?

Too soon?

No, darling. Not too soon.



Not too soon at all.



You *always* cry when people pop the question, Pepper?

No, Happy. Just *billionaires*.

Rome, Italy:

Half a million people protest rumors of European super-soldiers.





Leave
these people
alone.



Brooklyn:

--yet to hear a statement from the Italian authorities, but Thor's shocking attack on the city's police has been condemned by--

Mommy! Mommy! Daddy's coming up the driveway now!

The hell happened to the *security detail*? We're supposed to have six guys on this place *twenty-four seven*.

They're helping Mrs. Bernstein get her cat out of the dryer. It doesn't matter. I've been trying to *call* you, Clint. Didn't you get my *messages*?

Tok. Can *never* figure out these stupid things.

What happened?

It's *Thor*. He finally flipped. He just took out a hundred *Italian cops* and Nick Fury's called an *emergency meeting*.

I think they're sending you to *Europe*.

The Dome, Brussels:



Ladies and gents, I'd like you all to meet Professor Sir James Braddock of the European Defense Initiative.

Sir James has been overseeing the super-soldier program out here for the last two years and he's as big a name in bio-engineering as Bruce Banner was back home.



Excuse the mess, but we're still six to eight months from going public with this place. Anyone fancy a cup of tea?

Uh, it's *Captain Britain*, right? Tony was telling me all about that *submarine rescue* you guys did a few weeks back. That was pretty *amazing*.

Oh, Tony's *hilarious*, isn't he? Everyone here just absolutely *loved* him.

We've all been very excited about meeting you too, Captain. Did you know I used to have a poster of you on my wall when I was a pupil up at Fettes College in Edinburgh?



Other boys it was **John Lennon** and **Che Guevara**, my son it was the ultimate icon of **military imperialism**.

Brian Braddock, ladies and gentlemen. Captain Britain. The only man under **seventy-five** who'd agree to wear a **Union Jack** on his chest.

Don't listen to him. I designed the exo-suit. He's just **ugly** enough to look intelligent.

Over here is **Carlos Fraile** from Spain and **Hugo Etherlink** from France.

The Parliament hasn't finalized their **code-names** yet, but we're thinking Captain Spain and Captain France **anyway**. Just to keep things nice and simple.

Hey, man.

Eh, don't blame **me** for the protests. Not my fault if security dunno how to keep a **secret**.

Our moody Italian friend over there is **Umberto Landi**. **Captain Italy**. You might have seen those leaked **training photographs** of him on the **news** lately.

There's nine member states involved in the initial stage of the program, but these are the only ones ready for the kind of **combat** you're about to get involved in.

What do you mean?

Exactly. And what does any of this have to do with **Thor**?

Gunnar, perhaps **you** could explain...

Okay, my name is **Gunnar Golmen**. I have been heading up the Norwegian team for the last twenty-four months.

We did a lot of market research before we started work on our country's representative and the national icon we selected was **Thor**, the Viking God of Thunder.



"Like you, we were unable to crack the secrets of Captain America's super-soldier serum and opted for a bio-mechanical approach to the post-human we were developing.

"Using Norse iconography, I designed a harness that would imbue the wearer with flight, durability and a level of strength unseen in even the **mutant** community."

"However, our biggest success was the power battery we created in the form of Thor's mystical hammer.

"This hammer could ionize the environment and artificially manipulate the weather or even use its four-dimensional engine to teleport the wearer anywhere in the world.

"Of all the super-soldiers we designed here, Thor was unquestionably the most formidable and would have been the leader were it not for my lunatic brother.

"Obviously, you've all met Thorlief. Or **Thor**, as he's been calling himself since he stole my damn hardware."



Is this a gag?



I only wish it were, Mister Stark. I've always been very *close* to my brother, you understand.

He might be a little odd and lack social skills, but he's all the family I have and I tried to spend a lot of time with him after his *nervous breakdown*.



"He was a nurse *himself* before he went into the hospital. Always interested in animals and the environment. I never thought he could hurt me like that. Or do what he did to *this place*..."



That was eighteen months ago. Eighteen months and we're *still* picking up the pieces of what we lost that night.



What's he *saying*? Is Thor a *fake*? Is his *hammer* and stuff just stolen hardware?

That's exactly what he's saying, Jan. We've known about this right from the start, but figured it was time *everyone else* got brought up to speed.

Jeez.



This doesn't make sense at all. If Thor was running around with stolen goods why didn't you do something before now?



Like what? Thor was designed to be the most powerful superhuman on the planet. That belt protects him from even *psychic* attacks. Were *you* gonna take him down?

Besides, Thorlief might have had his problems, he might have had these insane *delusions*, but nobody could say his *heart* wasn't in the right place.



He helped you guys out a few times, yeah? It's just this recent stuff that's been dangerous...encouraging violence against democratically-elected governments.



So what do you want us to do?

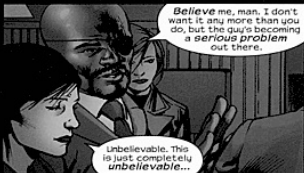


Bring him in tonight. Before this gets any worse.

I want all seven of you to work with these guys from the European Division and, of course, you'll be backed to the hilt by our *conventional* people too.



I'm sorry. I don't know if I can *do* this.



Believe me, man. I don't want it any more than you do, but the guy's becoming a *serious problem* out there.

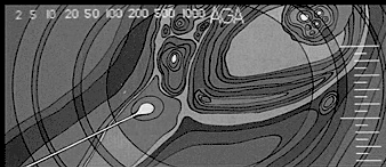
Unbelievable. This is just completely *unbelievable*...

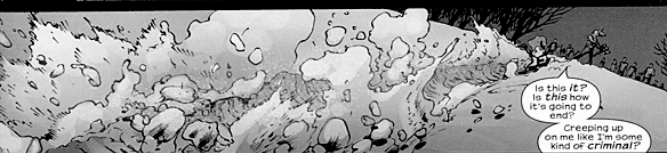


Way to ruin our first *team-up*, Nick.

Norway:









If you think we're leaving you *behind* like this you're out of your mind.

If you stay you're only going to get killed. Trust me. I know what I'm doing here. I knew this would happen sooner or later and I'm ready for whatever they throw at me.



But if *we* stay, too, they won't be *able* to attack.

Now who's being crazy?

Just go and take the others with you, huh? I'll be fine. Just have a little faith and this will all work out.



Forest is clear for a mile in every direction. U.S. and European units are on standby and awaiting further orders.

Roger that, Eagle-One.



You don't have to do this, Captain.

Oh, yes we do.





You're being tricked.
Perceived by my evil
half-brother. This is all
Loki's masquerade. Don't
you see? He can shuffle
time and space. He just
made all this up.



Thor, for
God's sake.

It happened in the
restaurant while I was
talking to Volstagg.

I didn't notice
at the time, but
there was a ripple
in the scenery. Just
before he gave things
a little nudge and
turned all those
dates and times
against me.

Please, Thor.
Don't make this any
harder than it has to be.



That guy you met back at the
complex. He isn't real. He's the
Asgardian God of Mischief and
he's laughing up his sleeve at
you. He only sent you here to
spoil my father's mission.

Thor, will
you *stop*?



You're *sick*. Don't you understand?
You're a danger to yourself and a danger
to other people now.

No, you only
think that because
Loki's twisted *reality*.
That's what he does.
Don't you see? He just
twists things around
to cause *problems*
for me.



We've read
your file, Thor.
This is all in
your head.



Cap, for God's
sake! Make them
listen to me,
huh?



Sorry,
chum.

You're nuts
and you're going
down.

TO BE CONTINUED...